

Principles of War: A Translation from the Japanese

by Dr. Joseph West

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FOREWORD

Principles of War is a reprinted translation from the Japanese. The idea for the translation came from Colonel Tsutomu Matsumura, Japanese Liaison Officer at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Knowing the nature of the original version and being keenly aware of the role played by historical examples, Colonel Matsumura suggested *Principles of War* be shared with a larger, English speaking audience. Upon approval by the Deputy Commandant, USACGSC, Dr. Joseph West translated the book under TRADOC contract.

Senri nyumon (An Introduction to the Principles of War) is required reading for all Japan Ground Self-Defense Force officers. The book is not read once and forgotten — it is one of the basic texts studied by Japanese officers in preparation for the highly competitive entrance exam to the Japanese Command and Staff School. Unlike many books about tactics, *Principles* offers a lively and vivid picture of the art of warfare. The chief reason for this quality lies in the use of specific historical examples of battles won and lost to illustrate a particular tactic or principle. In a narrow sense, it reveals the value of military history when properly applied to abstract concepts. The historical examples are wide ranging and diverse. The authors have great respect for the evolution of military science, drawing on Eastern and Western military experiences alike. By offering samples rich in military tradition, the book affords new insights for the American officer which will broaden and deepen his historical consciousness.

Many of the battles cited in *Principles* will not be immediately recognizable to American readers. In order to enhance the usability of the material, the Combat Studies Institute has appended a selective bibliography of material relating to the examples used in the text. This will enable the reader to pursue additional study in selected areas of interest.

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Preface

Hitherto, a relatively large amount of partial and fragmentary literature concerning the principles of war has been found here and there, but a systematized work has not existed up to now.

There are difficulties in systematization of the principles of war that shed light on its true nature (theory that has the character of developing dialectically from rationality and actual proof). But in view of the state of knowledge of modern young officers, etc., as stated in the Forward, since it is fully realized that study of the principles of war is an urgent necessity, systematization was undertaken through the Board for Study of the Principles of War.

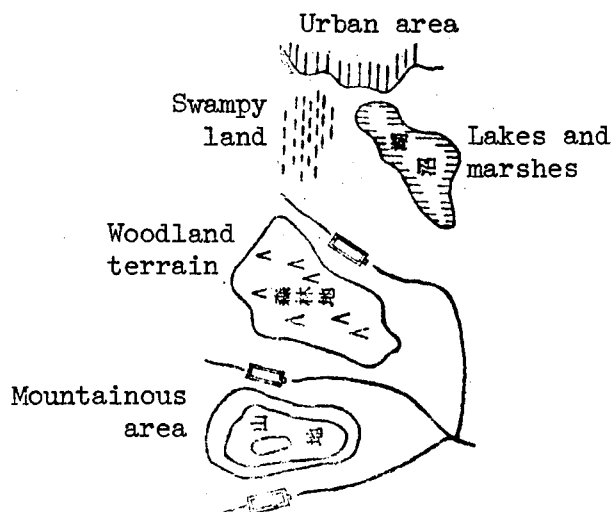
In this systematization, under the direction of Instructors Onizawa, Nozoe, and Yamanouchi, and with Instructors Daihachi Matsumoto, Kiyofuji, and Maeda as a nucleus, a draft was compiled in March 1967 and, by great effort, was generally completed in August, and its essentials were presented incrementally through the *Kanbu-gakkō-kiji* [Staff College News].

Fortunately, it received a favorable reception from all of you readers, and now, in response to your request that it be brought out in book form, it has been edited by Instructor Tomizawa and has reached the stage of publication as a reference work for beginning students of military tactics. Of course, this book is only one step in the study, and there is believed to be much room for improvement, but the book is being presented hurriedly for use by beginning students in diligently teaching themselves, and it is hoped that you readers will give us your suggestions and corrections.

Finally, profound gratitude is expressed to Nishiura, Chief of the Military History Department of the National Defense College, who provided guidance concerning the approach to the principles of war; to Tanaka Shoten [Tanaka Book Company], that devoted exceptional effort to the publication; and to Colonel Toshinobu Ikeda and to the Board members listed below.

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It is very gratifying here to be able to submit to the officers of the Ground Self-Defense Force the *Introduction to the Principles of War*, which has brought together the study results of our school's Board for Study of the Principles of War.

It goes without saying that explaining the "principles of combat" and the many other principles (except doctrine matters) presented in textbooks, as well as the various fundamentals which are omitted from the textbooks but are the basis for the various principles, is the point of departure for improvement in strategic capability.

However, in order to be able, under all situations, to make accurate decisions and to form creative plans that accomplish the mission, it is absolutely necessary ordinarily to identify these principles in all military histories and other books on military science, to give careful thought and consideration to them, to train in them through applied tactics and field exercises, and to incorporate them into one's own capability.

This book sought and analyzed proven lessons in military history concerning the principles of war considered particularly important up to about the end of World War II, compared and carefully examined well-known ancient and modern books on military science, and consolidated and systematized the material, and it is believed to be a good reference book for young officers seeking to study strategy and tactics. Of course, in the implementation of applied tactics, field exercises, etc., it should be borne in mind that the principles of war presented in this book should not be followed blindly in making one's decisions, but, as stated above, one must confront matters with something that, through diligent study, has become an integral part of one's own capability.

In regard to principles of war that must be added anew after World War II (such as, for example, the principle of war of countering indirect aggression), there must be continuing study and a quest for critiques everywhere, in order to ensure greater perfection.

January 1969

Haruo Umezawa, Lt Gen
Commandant, Ground Self-Defense Force Staff College

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